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JOINT PANEL URGED FOR INTELLIGENCE

Baker Asserts One Committee
With a Small Staff Would
Keep Secrets Better

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 31 — Howard H. Baker Jr., the Senate majority leader, said today that the House and the Senate intelligence committees should be combined into one joint committee.

Mr. Baker, a Tennessee Republican, told the Select Committee to Study the Senate Committee System, "We have a real problem on our hands with the intelligence committees." He said growth of the committees' staff and unauthorized disclosures from the committees had raised questions about the dependability of the committees in their function of overseeing intelligence agencies.

Earlier this year the committees were involved in sharp disputes with the Central Intelligence Agency over allegations raised in both the Senate and the House that the C.I.A. had withheld or glossed over vital information about its covert operations, particularly those conducted against the Sandinista leadership of Nicaragua. At one point, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, submitted his resignation to the Senate intelligence committee in protest against the C.I.A., but he later decided to stay on.

"If the Congress is going to be a full partner in formulating foreign policy," Mr. Baker said, it needs "a workable system of oversight."

He suggested a small joint committee with a "very, very small" staff responsible only to the director of the committee.

Opposition in Past

In the past, House leaders have opposed joint committees, including the now defunct Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, saying that senators often dominated the committees and the publicity they received.

But House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., Democrat of Massachusetts, today subscribed to the joint committee idea, saying he originally proposed a joint intelligence committee, only to have the Senate resist. But he said a change now from the two committees would be very difficult.

Mr. Baker made his comments at a hearing on the structure of the Senate committee system, which has come under heavy criticism because of its duplicative processes. Under current procedures, a single issue, such as the production of the MX missile, could be debated and voted on as part of the debate over the budget resolution, the bill authorizes military programs or the bill appropriating money for those programs.

Referring to this three-layer system, Mr. Baker said, "There is no way that makes sense."

Mr. Baker did not make specific proposals for changing this system, except to suggest, as others have, some combination of the appropriation and authorization process into one.

"I'm not here to give you an answer," he said. "I'm here to identify the problem and the problem is things have just got out of hand."

Effect of Change

Both Mr. Baker and Mark O. Hatfield, Republican of Oregon, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, mentioned the idea of having programs authorized for two years or more while money would be appropriated annually.

But Mr. Hatfield, in his statement, concluded that any change in the system probably would not make any difference in how the Senate did its work. "No matter how many reforms we undertake, no matter how many procedural inducements or barriers we may create to encourage or discourage certain types of behavior, we will always have what John Wesley politely described as backsliding."

"I always wanted a joint committee," Mr. O'Neill said today about Mr. Baker's suggestion for the intelligence committees. "But we've got people lined up for the committee and a chairman appointed for next year so that is not so easy to do."